

## Account of an Octopus Bite

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It has been long known that bites of certain species of octopuses are poisonous (Halstead, 1959), but actual descriptions of the bites and the sensations experienced by the persons bitten are rare in the literature. Consequently, the following account appears worth reporting.

While sorting biological specimens from a trynet sample, during a regular sampling run of the Florida Board of Conservation Research Vessel R/V *Hernan Cortez*, I received a bite from a small female octopus (*Octopus joubini* Robson), with a body length of 50 mm. The sample was taken at 1855 hours on 3 March 1966, about 18 miles west of Egmont Key, Florida ( $27^{\circ} 37' \text{ N}$ ,  $83^{\circ} 07' \text{ W}$ ), at a depth of 10 fathoms.

The animal adhered to the back of my left hand, rapidly stretched all eight tentacles, and then contracted tightly. This produced an astringent effect on my skin. Suddenly a sharp, piercing sensation occurred in my hand directly below the animal's bulbous body. The combination of the animal's tight grip, its slippery body, and the fact that my other hand was wet caused difficulty in removing the octopus quickly. During this slight time interval of approximately four seconds a severe pain proceeded from the bite region up my arm to the deltoid area. Here the pain terminated and diffused into a vague and generalized sensation which remained in the shoulder region.

The wound consisted of two small circular holes which emitted a slight stream of blood. Almost instantly a pure white welt of about 25 mm diameter formed around the bite. The region began to swell, and the pain in my arm subsided slightly. A commercial antiseptic was applied to the wound.

During the following hour I experienced constant pain localized in the bite region, accompanied by nausea, headache, and fever. This condition remained for the first eight hours, progressively lessening during the next 12 hours. Neither food nor liquids were desired for about 24 hours, during which time I remained in bed.

On the morning of March 5, 36 hours after the bite, I was able to get up and take nourishment. The next day I felt well with no

apparent adverse effects except a sensitive and swollen wrist. Normal appetite and body functions resumed.

The bite region remained swollen and had a noticeable itchiness for the following three weeks. During this period there was a serious discharge from the unhealed wound. At the end of the third week these conditions subsided, leaving a 3 mm wound surrounded by a 10 mm red periphery. One month after the bite was received, these measurements were reduced to 2 mm and 6 mm, respectively, and healing proceeded rapidly.

The specimen had the following measurements: top of head to tip of longest arm, 72; longest arm, 51; maximum radius, 99; mantle length, 50 mm.

A report of another bite by the same species, *O. joubini*, appeared in a recent number of Sea Secrets (Anonymous, 1965). The sensations recorded by the victim of this bite, Edward A. Schumann, M.D., were very similar to the symptoms I experienced. Both bites occurred on the hand.

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#### LITERATURE CITED

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